Jefferson, Thomas.

NOTES

ON THE

ESTABLISMENT

OF A

MONEY UNIT,

AND OF A

COINAGE FOR THE UNITED STATES.

IN fixing the Unit of Money, theſe circumſtances are of principal importance.

I. That it be of *convenient ſize* to be applied as a meaſure to the common money tranſactions of life.

II. That its parts and multiples be in *an eaſy proportion* to each other, ſo as to facilitate the money arithmetic.

III. That the unit and its parts or diviſions be *ſo nearly of the value of ſome of the known coins*, as that they may be of eaſy adoption for the people.

The Spaniſh dollar ſeems to fulfil all theſe conditions.

I. Taking into our view all money tranſactions, great and ſmall, I queſtion if a common meaſure of more *con-*

venient ſize than the dollar could be propoſed. The value of 100, 1000, 10,000 dollars is well eſtimated by the mind. So is that of the tenth or the hundredth of a dollar. Few tranſactions are above or below theſe limits. The expediency of attending to the ſize of the money unit will be evident to any one who will conſider how inconvenient it would be to a manufacturer or merchant, if, inſtead of the yard for meaſuring cloth, either the inch or the mile had been made the unit of meaſure.

II. The moſt *eaſy ratio* of multiplication and diviſion is that by ten. Every one knows the facility of decimal arithmetic. Every one remembers, that, when learning money-arithmetic, he uſed to be puzzled with adding the farthings, taking out the fours and carrying them on; adding the pence, taking out the twelves, and carrying them on; adding the ſhillings, taking out the twenties and carrying them on. But when he came to the pounds, where he had only tens to carry forward, it was eaſy and free from error. The bulk of mankind are ſchool boys thro' life. Theſe little perplexities are always great to them. And even mathematical heads feel the relief of an eaſier ſubſtituted for a more difficult proceſs. Foreigners too who trade or travel among us, will find a great facility in underſtanding our coins and accounts from this ratio of ſubdiviſion. Thoſe who have had occaſion to convert the livres, ſols and deniers of the French, the gilders, ſtivers and penings of the Dutch, the pounds, ſhillings, pence and farthings of theſe ſeveral ſtates into each other, can judge how much they would have been aided had their ſeveral ſubdiviſions been in a decimal ratio. Certainly in all caſes where we are free to chuſe between eaſy and difficult modes of operation, it is moſt rational to chuſe the eaſy. The Financier, therefore, in his report, well propoſes that our coins ſhould be in decimal proportions to one another. If we adopt the dollar for our unit, we ſhould ſtrike four coins, one of gold, two of ſilver, and one of copper. viz.

1. A golden piece equal in value to 10 dollars.
2. The unit, or dollar, of ſilver.
3. The tenth of a dollar, of ſilver alſo.

4. The hundredth of a dollar, of copper.

Compare the arithmetical operations on the same sum of money expressed in this form, and expressed in the pound sterling and its divisions.

	l.	s.	d.	qrs.		Dollars.
Addition.	8	13	11	1/2	=	38.65
	4	12	8	3/4	=	20.61
	13	6	8	1/4	=	59.26

	l.	s.	d.	qrs.		Dollars.
Subtraction.	8	13	11	1/2	=	38.65
	4	12	8	3/4	=	20.61
	4	1	2	3/4	=	18.04

Multiplication by 8.

l.	s.	d.	qrs.		Dollars.
8	13	11	1/2	=	38.65
20					8
173					309.2 D.
12					
2087					
4					
8350					
8					
66,800					
16,700					
3/4					
1/2					
139	1	--- 8			
l. 69	11	--- 8			

Diviſion by 8.

l.	s.	d.	qrs.		Dollars.
8	13	11	½	=	8|38.65
20					4.83
173					
12					
2087					
4					
8350			qrs.		
35	¼	260	–	–	¾
30	1/12	2|1	–	8	
6		1.1|1	–	8	– ¾
8					

A bare inſpection of the above operations will evince the labour which is occaſioned by ſubdividing the unit into 20ths, 240ths, and 960ths, as the English do, and as we have done; and the eaſe of ſubdiviſions in a decimal ratio. The ſame difference ariſes in making payment. An Engliſhman, to pay 8l. 13s. 11d. ½ qrs. muſt find by calculation what combination of the coins of his country will pay this ſum. But an American, having the ſame ſum to pay, thus expreſſed 38.65 Dollars, will know by inſpection only, that 3 golden pieces, 8 units or dollars, 6 tenths and five coppers pay it preciſely.

III. The third condition required, is that the unit, its multiples, and ſubdiviſions coincide in value with ſome of the known coins ſo nearly, that the people may, by a quick reference in the mind, eſtimate their value. If this be not attended to, they will be very long in adopting the innovation, if ever they adopt it. Let us examine in this point of view each of the four coins propoſed.

1. The golden piece will be $\frac{1}{5}$ more than a half Joe, and $\frac{1}{13}$ more than a double guinea. It will be readily eſtimated then by reference to either of them; but more readily and accurately as equal to 10 dollars.

2. The unit or dollar is a known coin, and the moſt familiar of all to the minds of the people. It is already adopted from South to North; has identified our currency, and therefore happily offers itſelf as an unit already introduced. Our public debt, our requiſitions, and their apportionments have given it actual and long poſſeſſion of the place of unit. The courſe of our commerce too will bring us more of this than of any other foreign coin, and therefore renders it more worthy of attention. I know of no unit which can be propoſed in competition with the dollar, but the pound. But what is the pound? 1547 grains of fine ſilver in Georgia; 1289 grains in Virginia, Connecticut, Rhode iſland, Maſſachuſets, and New Hampshire; 1031 $\frac{1}{4}$ grains in Maryland, Delaware, Pennſylvania, and New Jerſey; 966 $\frac{3}{4}$ grains in North Carolina and New York. Which of theſe ſhall we adopt? To which ſtate give that pre-eminence, of which all are ſo jealous? And on which impoſe the difficulties of a new eſtimate for their corn, their cattle, and other commodities? Or ſhall we hang the pound ſterling, as a common badge, about all their necks? This contains 1718 $\frac{3}{4}$ grains of pure ſilver. It is difficult to familiarize a new coin to the people. It is more difficult to familiarize them to a new coin with an old name. Happily the dollar is familiar to them all; and is already as much referred to for a meaſure of value as their reſpective provincial pounds.

3. The Tenth will be preciſely the Spaniſh bit, or half piſtereen. This is a coin familiar to us all. When we ſhall make a new coin then equal in value to this, it will be of ready eſtimate with the people.

4. The hundredth, or copper, will differ little from the copper of the four Eaſtern ſtates, which is $\frac{1}{108}$ of a dollar; ſtill leſs from the penny of New York and North Carolina which is $\frac{1}{90}$ of a dollar: and ſomewhat more from the penny or copper of Jerſey, Pennſylvania, Delaware and Maryland, which is $\frac{1}{90}$ of a dollar. It will then be about

the medium between the old and the new coppers of theſe ſtates, and therefore will ſoon be ſubſtituted for them both. In Virginia coppers have never been in uſe, It will be as eaſy therefore to introduce them there of one value as of another. The copper coin propoſed will be nearly equal to three fourths of their penny, which is the ſame with the penny lawful of the Eaſtern ſtates.

A great deal of ſmall change is uſeful in a ſtate, and tends to reduce the prices of ſmall articles. Perhaps it would not be amiſs to coin 3 ſupplementory pieces of ſilver, one of the value of five tenths, or half a dollar, one of the value of two tenths, which would be equal to the Spaniſh piſtereen, and one of the value of five coppers, which would be equal to the Spaniſh halfbit. We ſhould then have five ſilver coins, viz.

1. The unit or dollar
2. The half dollar or five tenths.
3. The double tenth, equal to .2, or $\frac{1}{5}$ of a dollar, or to the piſtereen.
4. The tenth, equal to a Spaniſh bit.
5. The five copper piece equal to .05 or $\frac{1}{20}$ of a dollar, or to the half bit.

The plan reported by the Financier is worthy of his ſound judgment. It admits however of objection in the ſize of the unit. He propoſes that this ſhall be the 1440 th part of a dollar: ſo that it will require 1440 of his units to make the one before propoſed. He was led to adopt this by a mathematical attention to our old currencies all of which this unit will meaſure without leaving a fraction. But as our object is to get rid of theſe currencies, the advantage derived from this coincidence will ſoon be paſt, whereas the inconveniencies of this unit will for ever remain, if they do not altogether prevent its introduction. It is defective in two of the three requiſites of a money unit.

1. It is inconvenient in its application to the ordinary money tranſactions. 10,000 dollars will require 8 figures to expreſs them, to wit, 14,400,000 units. A horſe or bullock, of 80 dollars value, will require a notation of ſix figures, to wit, 115,200 units. As a money of account

this will be laborious, even when facilitated by the aid of decimal arithmetic: as a common measure of the value of property, it will be too minute to be comprehended by the people. The French are subjected to very laborious calculations, the livre being their ordinary money of account, and this but between $\frac{1}{5}$ and $\frac{1}{6}$ of a dollar. But what will be our labours, should our money of account be $\frac{1}{1440}$th of a dollar only?

2. It is neither equal, nor near to any of the known coins in value.

If we determine that a dollar shall be our unit, we must then say with precision what a dollar is. This coin, as struck at different times, of different weights and fineness, is of different values. Sir Isaac Newton's assay and representation to the Lords of the Treasury in 1717 of those which he examined, made their values as follows:

	dwt.	grs.		grains.	
The Seville piece of eight,	17	12	contained	387	of pure silver.
The Mexico piece of eight,	17	10 $\frac{5}{9}$		385 $\frac{1}{2}$	
The Pillar piece of eight,	17	9		385 $\frac{3}{4}$	
The new Seville piece of eight,	14	0		308 $\frac{7}{10}$	

The Financier states the old dollar as containing 376 grains of fine silver, and the new 365 grains. If the dollars circulating among us be of every date equally, we should examine the quantity of pure metal in each, and from them form an average for our unit. This is a work proper to be committed to Mathematicians as well as Merchants, and which should be decided on actual and accurate experiment.

The quantum of alloy is also to be decided. Some is necessary to prevent the coin from wearing too fast. Too much would fill our pockets with copper instead of silver. The silver coins assayed by Sir Isaac Newton varied from 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ to 76 penny-weight alloy in the pound Troy of mixed metal. The British standard has 18 dwt. The Spanish coins assayed by Sir Isaac Newton have from 18 to 19 $\frac{1}{2}$ dwt. The new French crown has in fact 19 $\frac{1}{2}$, though by edict it should have 20 dwt. that is $\frac{1}{12}$. The taste of our countrymen will require that their furniture plate should be as good as the British standard. Taste cannot be controuled

by law. Let it then give the law in a point which is indifferent to a certain degree. Let the legiſlatures fix the alloy of furniture plate at 18 dwt. the British ſtandard, and Congreſs that of their coin at one ounce in the pound, the French ſtandard. This proportion has been found convenient for the alloy of gold coin, and it will ſimplify the ſyſtem of our mint to alloy both metals in the ſame degree. The coin too being the leaſt pure, will be leſs eaſily melted into plate. Theſe reaſons are light indeed, and of courſe will only weigh if no heavier ones can be oppoſed to them.

The proportion between the values of gold and ſilver is a mercantile problem altogether. It would be inaccurate to fix it by the popular exchanges of a half Joe for eight dollars, a Louis for four French crowns, or five Louis for twenty-three dollars. The firſt of theſe would be to adopt the Spanish proportion between gold and ſilver; the ſecond the French; the third a mere popular barter, wherein convenience is conſulted more than accuracy. The legal proportion in Spain is 16 for 1, in England 15 $\frac{1}{5}$ for 1, in France 15 for 1. The Spaniards and Engliſh are found in experience to retain an over-proportion of gold coins and to loſe their ſilver. The French have a greater proportion of ſilver. The difference at market has been on the decreaſe. The Financier ſtates it at preſent as at 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ for 1. Juſt principles will lead us to diſregard legal proportions altogether; to enquire into the market price of gold in the ſeveral countries with which we ſhall principally be connected in commerce, and to take an average from them. Perhaps we might with ſafety lean to a proportion ſomewhat above par for gold, conſidering our neighbourhood and commerce with the ſources of the coins, and the tendency which the high price of gold in Spain has to draw thither all that of their mines, leaving the ſilver principally for our, and other markets.

It is not impoſſible that 15 for 1, may be found an eligible proportion. I ſtate it however as conjectural only.

As to the alloy for gold coin, the British is an ounce in the pound; the French, Spanish, and Portugueſe differ

from that only from a quarter of a grain to a grain and a half. I should therefore prefer the British, merely because its fraction ſtands in a more ſimple form, and facilitates the calculations into which it enters.

Should the unit be fixed at 365 grains of pure ſilver, gold at 15 for 1, and the alloy of both be one twelfth, the weights of the coins will be as follows:

The golden piece, containing 243 $\frac{1}{3}$ grains of pure metal,—22.12 grains of alloy, will weigh 11 dwt. 1.45 grs.

The unit or dollar, containing 365 grs. of pure metal, 33.18 grs. of alloy, will weigh 16 dwt. 14.18 grs.

The half dollar, or five tenths, containing 182 $\frac{1}{2}$ of pure metal,—16.59 grs. of alloy, will weigh 8 dwt. 7.09 grs.

The fifth, or piſtereen, containing 73 grains of pure metal,—6.63 grs. of alloy, will weigh 3 dwt. 7.63 grs.

The tenth, or bit, containing 36 $\frac{1}{2}$ grs. of pure metal,—3.318 grs. of alloy, will weigh 1 dwt. 15 818 grs.

The twentieth, or half bit, containing 18 $\frac{1}{4}$ grs. of pure metal,—1.659 grs. of alloy, will weigh 19.9 grs.

The quantity of fine ſilver which ſhall conſtitute the unit being ſettled, and the proportion of the value of gold to that of ſilver; a table ſhould be formed from the aſſay before ſuggeſted, claſſing the ſeveral foreign coins according to their fineneſs, declaring the worth of a pennyweight or grain in each claſs, and that they ſhall be lawful tenders at thoſe rates, if not clipped or otherwiſe diminished; and where diminished, offering their value for them at the mint, deducting the expence of re-coinage. Here the legiſlatures ſhould co-operate with Congreſs in providing that no money be received or paid at their treaſuries, or by any of their officers, or any bank, but on actual weight; in making it criminal in a high degree to diminish their own coins, and in ſome ſmaller degree to offer them in payment when diminished.

That this ſubject may be properly prepared and in readineſs for Congreſs to take up at their meeting in November, ſomething muſt now be done. The preſent ſeſſion drawing to a cloſe, they probably would not chuſe to enter far into this undertaking themſelves. The com-

mittee of the ſtates however, during the receſs, will have time to digeſt it thoroughly, if Congreſs will fix ſome general principles for their government. Suppoſe then they be inſtructed

To appoint proper perſons to aſſay and examine, with the utmoſt accuracy practicable, the Spaniſh milled dollars of different dates in circulation with us.

To aſſay and examine in like manner the fineneſs of all other the coins which may be found in circulation within theſe ſtates.

To report to the Committee the reſult of theſe aſſays, by them to be laid before Congreſs.

To appoint alſo proper perſons to enquire what are the proportions between the values of fine gold and fine ſilver at the markets of the ſeveral countries with which we are or probably may be connected in commerce; and what would be a proper proportion here, having regard to the average of their values at thoſe markets and to other circumſtances, and to report the ſame to the Committee, by them to be laid before Congreſs.

To prepare an ordinance for eſtabliſhing the unit of money within theſe ſtates; for ſubdividing it, and for ſtriking coins of gold, ſilver, and copper, on the following principles.

That the money unit of theſe ſtates ſhall be equal in value to a Spaniſh milled dollar, containing ſo much fine ſilver as the aſſay before directed ſhall ſhew to be contained on an average in dollars of the ſeveral dates in circulation with us.

That this unit ſhall be divided into tenths and hundredths.

That there ſhall be a coin of ſilver of the value of an unit.

One other of the ſame metal of the value of one tenth of an unit.

One other of copper of the value of the hundredth of an unit.

That there ſhall be a coin of gold of the value of ten units, according to the report before directed and the judgment of the Committe thereon.

That the alloy of the ſaid coins of gold and ſilver ſhall be equal in weight to one eleventh part of the fine metal.

That there be proper devices for theſe coins.

That meaſures be propoſed for preventing their diminution, and alſo their currency, and that of any others when diminished.

That the ſeveral foreign coins be deſcribed and claſſed in the ſaid ordinance, the fineneſs of each claſs ſtated, and its value by weight eſtimated in units and decimal parts of units.

And that the ſaid draught of an ordinance be reported to Congreſs at their next meeting for their conſideration and determination.

Annapolis, April, 1784.

Supplementory Explanations.

THE preceding notes having been ſubmitted to the conſideration of the Financier, he favored me with his opinion and obſervations on them, which render neceſſary the following ſupplementory explanations.

I obſerved in the preceding notes, that the true proportion of value between gold and ſilver was a mercantile problem altogether, and that perhaps 15 for 1 might be found an eligible proportion. The Financier is ſo good as to inform me, that this would be higher than the market would juſtify, Confident of his better information on this ſubject, I recede from that idea.*

He alſo informs me, that the ſeveral coins in circulation among us have been already aſſayed with accuracy,

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* In a Newſpaper, which frequently gives good details in political œconomy, I find, under the Hamburgh head, that the preſent market price of gold and ſilver, is, in England 15.5 for 1: in Ruſſia 15: in Holland 14.75: in Savoy 14.6: in France 14.42: in Spain 14.3: in Germany 14 155. The average of which is 14.675 or 14 5-8ths. I would ſtill incline to give a little more than the market price for gold, becauſe of its ſuperior convenience in tranſportation.

and the reſult published in a work on that ſubject. The aſſay of Sir Iſaac Newton had ſuperſeded, in my mind, the neceſſity of this operation as to the older coins, which were the ſubject of his examination. This latter work, with equal reaſon, may be conſidered as ſaving the ſame trouble as to the latter coins.

So far then I accede to the opinions of the Financier. On the other hand, he ſeems to concur with me in thinking his ſmalleſt fractional diviſion too minute for an unit, and therefore propoſes to transfer that denomination to his largeſt ſilver coin, containing 1000 of the units firſt propoſed, and worth about 4ſ2 lawful, or $\frac{25}{10}$ of a dollar. The only queſtion then remaining between us, is whether the dollar, or this coin, be beſt for the unit. We both agree that the *eaſe of adoption with the people* is the thing to be aimed at.

1. As to the dollar, events have overtaken and ſuperceded the queſtion. It is no longer a doubt whether the people can adopt it with eaſe. They have actually adopted it, and will be to be turned out of that into another tract of calculation, if another unit be aſſumed. They have now two units, which they uſe with equal facility, viz. the pound of their reſpective ſtate, and the dollar. The firſt of theſe is peculiar to each ſtate: the ſecond happily common to all. In each ſtate the people have an eaſy rule for converting the pound of their ſtate into dollars, or dollars into pounds. And this is enough for them without knowing how this may be done in every ſtate of the union. Such of them as live near enough the borders of their ſtate to have dealings with their neighbours, learn alſo the rule of their neighbours. Thus in Virginia, and the Eaſtern ſtates, where the dollar is 6ſ or $\frac{3}{10}$ of a pound, to turn pounds into dollars, they multiply by 10 and divide by 3: to turn dollars into pounds, they multiply by 3 and divide by ten. Thoſe in Virginia who live near to Carolina, where the dollar is 8ſ or $\frac{4}{10}$ of a pound, learn the operation of that ſtate, which is a multiplication by 4, and diviſion by 10, et e converſo. Thoſe who live near Maryland, where the dollar is 7ſ6 or $\frac{3}{8}$ of a pound, multi-

ply by 3 and divide by 8, or e converſo. All theſe operations are eaſy, and have been found by experience not too much for the arithmetic of the people, when they have occaſion to convert their old unit into dollars, or the reverſe.

2. As to the unit of the Financier, in the ſtates where the dollar is $\frac{3}{10}$ of a pound, this unit will be $\frac{5}{24}$. Its converſion into the pound then will be by a multiplication by 5 and diviſion by 24. In the ſtates where the dollar is $\frac{3}{8}$ of a pound, this unit will be $\frac{25}{96}$ of a pound, and the operation muſt be to multiply by 25 and divide by 96, or e converſo. Where the dollar is $\frac{4}{10}$ of a pound, this unit will be $\frac{5}{18}$. The ſimplicity of the fraction, and of courſe the facility of converſion and reconverſion, is therefore againſt this unit, and in favour of the dollar, in every inſtance. The only advantage it has over the dollar is, that it will in every caſe expreſs our farthings without a remainder; whereas, though the dollar and its decimals will do this in many caſes, it will not in all. But, even in theſe, by extending your notation one figure further, to wit, to thouſandths, you approximate to perfect accuracy within leſs than the two thouſandth part of a dollar, an atom in money which every one would neglect. Againſt this ſingle inconvenience the other advantages of the dollar are more than ſufficient to preponderaté.---This unit will preſent to the people a new coin, and whether they endeavour to eſtimate its value by comparing it with a pound, or with a dollar, the units they now poſſeſs, they will find the fraction very compound, and of courſe leſs accommodated to their comprehenſion and habits than the dollar. Indeed the probability is that they could never be led to compute in it generally.

The Financier ſuppoſes that the $\frac{1}{100}$ of a dollar is not ſufficiently ſmall where the poor are purchaſers or venders. If it is not, make a ſmaller coin. But I ſuſpect that it is ſmall enough. Let us examine facts, in countries where we are acquainted with them. In Virginia, where our towns are few, ſmall, and of courſe their demand for neceſſaries very limited, we have never yet been

able to introduce a copper coin at all. The ſmalleſt coin which any body will receive there is the half bit, or $\frac{1}{20}$ of a dollar. In thoſe ſtates where the towns are larger and more populous, a more habitual barter for ſmall wants has called for a copper coin $\frac{1}{90}$ or $\frac{1}{96}$ or $\frac{1}{108}$ of a dollar. In England where the towns are many and populous, and where ages of experience have matured the conveniencies of intercourſe, they have found that ſome wants may be ſupplied for a farthing, or $\frac{1}{208}$ of a dollar, and they have accommodated a coin to this want. This buſineſs is evidently progreſſive. In Virginia we are far behind. In ſome other ſtates they are farther advanced, to wit, to the appreciation of $\frac{1}{90}$, $\frac{1}{96}$, $\frac{1}{108}$ of a dollar. To this moſt advanced ſtate then I accommodated my ſmalleſt coin in the decimal arrangement as a *money of payment*, correſponding with the *money of account*. I have no doubt the time will come when a ſmaller coin will be called for. When it comes, let it be made. It will probably be the half of the copper I propoſe, that is to ſay $\frac{5}{1000}$ or .005 of a dollar, this being nearly the farthing of England. But it will be time enough to make it when the people ſhall be ready to receive it.

My propoſition then is that our notation of money ſhall be decimal, deſcending ad libitum of the perſon noting; that the unit of this notation ſhall be a dollar, that coins ſhall be accommodated to it from ten dollars to the hundredth of a dollar; and that to ſet this on foot, the reſolutions be adopted which were propoſed in the Notes, only ſubſtituting an *enquiry into the fineneſs of the coins*, in lieu of *an aſſay* of them.

Annapolis, May 9, 1784.

FINIS.

Virginia — Assembly. 1786.

An ACT *for eſtabliſhing* RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, *paſſed in the aſſembly of Virginia in the beginning of the year* 1786.

WELL aware that Almighty God hath created the mind free; that all attempts to influence it by temporal punishments or burthens, or by civil incapacitations, tend only to beget habits of hypocriſy and meanneſs, and are a departure from the plan of the Holy Author of our religion, who, being Lord both of body and mind, yet choſe not to propagate it by coercions on either, as was in his Almighty power to do; that the impious preſumption of legiſlators and rulers civil, as well as eccleſiaſtical who, being themſelves but fallible and uninſpired men, have aſſumed dominion over the faith of others, ſetting up their own opinions and modes of thinking as the only true and infallible, and as ſuch endeavouring to impoſe them on others, hath eſtabliſhed and maintained falſe religions over the greateſt part of the world, and through all time: That to compel a man to furniſh contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves, is ſinful and tyrannical; that even the forcing him to ſupport this or that teacher of his own religious perſuaſion, is depriving him of the comfortable liberty of giving his contributions to the particular paſtor whoſe

morals he would make his pattern, and whoſe powers he feels moſt perſuaſive to righteouſneſs, and is withdrawing from the miniſtry thoſe temporal rewards, which, proceeding from an approbation of their perſonal conduct, are an additional incitement to earneſt and unremitting labours for the inſtruction of mankind; that our civil rights have no dependence on our religious opinions, more than on our opinions in phyſics or geometry; that therefore the proſcribing any citizen as unworthy the public confidence by laying upon him an incapacity of being called to offices of truſt and emolument, unleſs he profeſs or renounce this or that religious opinion, is depriving him injuriouſly of thoſe privileges and advantages to which in common with his fellow citizens he has a natural right; that it tends alſo to corrupt the principles of that very religion it is meant to encourage, by bribing, with a monopoly of worldly honors and emoluments, thoſe who will externally profeſs and conform to it; that though indeed theſe are criminal who do not withſtand ſuch temptation, yet neither are thoſe innocent who lay the bait in their way; that to ſuffer the civil magiſtrate to intrude his powers into the field of opinion, and to reſtrain the profeſſion or propagation of principles on ſuppoſition of their ill tendency is a dangerous fallacy, which at once deſtroys all religious li-

berty, becauſe he being of courſe judge of that tendency will make his opinions the rule of judgment, and approve or condemn the ſentiments of others only as they ſhall ſquare with or differ from his own; that it is time enough for the rightful purpoſes of civil government for its officers to interfere when principles break out into overt acts againſt peace and good order; and finally, that truth is great and will prevail if left to herſelf, that she is the proper and ſufficient antagoniſt to error, and has nothing to fear from the conflict, unleſs by human interpoſition diſarmed of her natural weapons, free argument and debate, errors ceaſing to be dangerous when it is permitted freely to contradict them:

Be it therefore enacted by the General Aſſembly; That no man ſhall be compelled to frequent or ſupport any religious worship, place or miniſtry whatſoever, nor ſhall be enforced, reſtrained, moleſted, or burthened in his body or goods, nor ſhall otherwiſe ſuffer on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men ſhall be free to profeſs and by argument to maintain their opinions in matters of religion, and that the ſame ſhall in no wiſe diminiſh, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities.

And though we well know that this Aſſembly, elected by the people for the ordinary purpoſes of

legiſlation only, have no power to reſtrain the acts of ſucceeding Aſſemblies, conſtituted with powers equal to our own, and that therefore to declare this act irrevocable would be of no effect in law, yet we are free to declare, and do declare, that the rights hereby aſſerted are of the natural rights of mankind, and that if any act ſhall be hereafter paſſed to repeal the preſent, or to narrow its operation, ſuch act will be an infringement of natural right.